

## Government Accountability Office

## §21.1

Protests and other documents may be filed by hand delivery, mail, commercial carrier, facsimile transmission, or other electronic means (but see §21.4(b) for restrictions on electronic filing where a protective order has been issued). Hand delivery and other means of delivery may not be practicable during certain periods due, for example, to security concerns or equipment failures. The filing party bears the risk that the delivery method chosen will not result in timely receipt at GAO.

(h) *Alternative dispute resolution* encompasses various means of resolving cases expeditiously, without a written decision, including techniques such as outcome prediction and negotiation assistance.

[61 FR 39042, July 26, 1996, as amended at 67 FR 79835, Dec. 31, 2002; 70 FR 19681, Apr. 14, 2005]

### §21.1 Filing a protest.

(a) An interested party may protest a solicitation or other request by a Federal agency for offers for a contract for the procurement of property or services; the cancellation of such a solicitation or other request; an award or proposed award of such a contract; and a termination of such a contract, if the protest alleges that the termination was based on improprieties in the award of the contract.

(b) Protests must be in writing and addressed as follows: General Counsel, Government Accountability Office, 441 G Street, NW., Washington, DC 20548, Attention: Procurement Law Control Group.

(c) A protest filed with GAO shall:

(1) Include the name, street address, electronic mail address, and telephone and facsimile numbers of the protester,

(2) Be signed by the protester or its representative,

(3) Identify the contracting agency and the solicitation and/or contract number,

(4) Set forth a detailed statement of the legal and factual grounds of protest including copies of relevant documents,

(5) Set forth all information establishing that the protester is an interested party for the purpose of filing a protest,

(6) Set forth all information establishing the timeliness of the protest,

(7) Specifically request a ruling by the Comptroller General of the United States, and

(8) State the form of relief requested.

(d) In addition, a protest filed with GAO may:

(1) Request a protective order,

(2) Request specific documents, explaining the relevancy of the documents to the protest grounds, and

(3) Request a hearing, explaining the reasons that a hearing is needed to resolve the protest.

(e) The protester shall furnish a complete copy of the protest, including all attachments, to the individual or location designated by the contracting agency in the solicitation for receipt of protests, or if there is no designation, to the contracting officer. The designated individual or location (or, if applicable, the contracting officer) must receive a complete copy of the protest and all attachments not later than 1 day after the protest is filed with GAO. The protest document must indicate that a complete copy of the protest and all attachments are being furnished within 1 day to the appropriate individual or location.

(f) No formal briefs or other technical forms of pleading or motion are required. Protest submissions should be concise and logically arranged, and should clearly state legally sufficient grounds of protest. Protests of different procurements should be separately filed.

(g) Unless precluded by law, GAO will not withhold material submitted by a protester from any party outside the government. If the protester believes that the protest contains information which should be withheld, a statement advising of this fact must be on the front page of the submission. This information must be identified wherever it appears, and the protester must file a redacted copy of the protest which omits the information with GAO and the agency within 1 day after the filing of its protest with GAO.

(h) Parties who intend to file documents containing classified information should notify GAO in advance to obtain advice regarding procedures for filing and handling the information.

## §21.2

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(i) A protest may be dismissed for failure to comply with any of the requirements of this section, except for the items in paragraph (d) of this section. In addition, a protest shall not be dismissed for failure to comply with paragraph (e) of this section where the contracting officer has actual knowledge of the basis of protest, or the agency, in the preparation of its report, was not prejudiced by the protester's noncompliance.

[61 FR 39042, July 26, 1996, as amended at 67 FR 79835, Dec. 31, 2002]

### §21.2 Time for filing.

(a)(1) Protests based upon alleged improprieties in a solicitation which are apparent prior to bid opening or the time set for receipt of initial proposals shall be filed prior to bid opening or the time set for receipt of initial proposals. In procurements where proposals are requested, alleged improprieties which do not exist in the initial solicitation but which are subsequently incorporated into the solicitation must be protested not later than the next closing time for receipt of proposals following the incorporation.

(2) Protests other than those covered by paragraph (a)(1) of this section shall be filed not later than 10 days after the basis of protest is known or should have been known (whichever is earlier), with the exception of protests challenging a procurement conducted on the basis of competitive proposals under which a debriefing is requested and, when requested, is required. In such cases, with respect to any protest basis which is known or should have been known either before or as a result of the debriefing, the initial protest shall not be filed before the debriefing date offered to the protester, but shall be filed not later than 10 days after the date on which the debriefing is held.

(3) If a timely agency-level protest was previously filed, any subsequent protest to GAO filed within 10 days of actual or constructive knowledge of initial adverse agency action will be considered, provided the agency-level protest was filed in accordance with paragraphs (a)(1) and (a)(2) of this section, unless the contracting agency imposes a more stringent time for filing, in which case the agency's time for fil-

ing will control. In cases where an alleged impropriety in a solicitation is timely protested to a contracting agency, any subsequent protest to GAO will be considered timely if filed within the 10-day period provided by this paragraph, even if filed after bid opening or the closing time for receipt of proposals.

(b) Protests untimely on their face may be dismissed. A protester shall include in its protest all information establishing the timeliness of the protest; a protester will not be permitted to introduce for the first time in a request for reconsideration information necessary to establish that the protest was timely.

(c) GAO, for good cause shown, or where it determines that a protest raises issues significant to the procurement system, may consider an untimely protest.

### §21.3 Notice of protest, submission of agency report, and time for filing of comments on report.

(a) GAO shall notify the contracting agency by telephone within 1 day after the filing of a protest, and, unless the protest is dismissed under this part, shall promptly send a written confirmation to the contracting agency and an acknowledgment to the protester. The contracting agency shall immediately give notice of the protest to the contractor if award has been made or, if no award has been made, to all bidders or offerors who appear to have a substantial prospect of receiving an award. The contracting agency shall furnish copies of the protest submissions to those parties, except where disclosure of the information is prohibited by law, with instructions to communicate further directly with GAO. All parties shall furnish copies of all protest communications to the contracting agency and to other participating parties. All protest communications shall be sent by means reasonably calculated to effect expeditious delivery.

(b) A contracting agency or intervenor which believes that the protest or specific protest allegations should be dismissed before submission of an agency report should file a request for dismissal as soon as practicable.